

To: Growth & Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny (to note)
From: Stuart Palmer, Asst. Director Strategic Housing
Date: 30 November 2010
Subject: A new Housing Strategy for the City - 2011-16

Introduction

The City's current Housing Strategy runs until 2011, and while the economic and political environment in which it was formed has materially changed, our city vision remains constant.

Now, more than at any time in the last few years is it important to ensure that we focus our collective resources and actions in areas that will see real benefits for the city. We must be clear on what we want to achieve, and how we will get there. We will have fewer resources to deal with increasing demands for our services and those of our housing partners.

The government have already started consultation on a range of housing issues including:

- New types of social housing tenure and changing rules of succession
- A duty for councils to develop a housing tenure policy for providers
- Changes to our duties to homeless people
- A new affordable rent at 80% of market rent
- Introducing a home swap scheme for mobility
- Changing social housing regulation
- Changing council housing finance
- Delivering affordable housing with less subsidy
- Incentives for more new home building and personal benefit caps.

The comprehensive Spending review has heralded a 50% reduction in funding for housing with less public subsidy, both for projects and people. Our task will be more challenging, therefore we need to be clear about what our priorities are, and what we can aspire to deliver over the next five years through innovation, smarter and more effective joint working across public, private and community led agencies.

We are planning a Housing Strategy Conference to start the process, looking at the housing issues, challenges and options for Plymouth, and help to form a new strategic direction. Our aim is to agree clear and practical objectives, priorities and policies to improve the quality of people's lives, and further the economic and physical growth of the city. We need to tackle inequalities and deprivation, and offer support to individuals and communities, while developing choice and opportunities for individual and community aspiration.

To help this process we are developing four discussion papers as a starting point for working through these challenges, and options to address each. They are set out in themes, and will form the core of the workshops at the conference, and task and finish groups after the conference.

But first we should not forget how far we have come in the last three years, and what we have achieved.

So far - so good?

A lot has been achieved in the last three years:

- Increasing the supply of new affordable homes with 886 delivered against a target of 678, top quartile performance, with £55 million of public investment leveraging in equivalent levels of private funding, with a number award winning projects.
- Tackling the regeneration of Devonport, remains firmly in delivery mode with over the past ten years 1447 new high quality homes already built or with planning, replacing poor standard council flats and houses drawing in £53 million investment as part of the wider regeneration of the area
- Transferring council housing to a new city based charitable housing association once again bringing in £270m of public funding and up to £1bn over the next 30 years to deliver a sustainable solution to decent housing standards for 15000 homes.
- Improving the energy efficiency of private homes; 6,193 measures installed resulting in 79,882 tonnes lifetime carbon dioxide savings as a result of Plymouth schemes.
- Completed the 10 year East End Renewal Area programme including housing renewal, affordable housing provision, a community village with business centre, resource centre, extra care housing and new park, a healthy living network, commercial improvements and a sustainable community partnership.
- Completed the Efford Building Communities Initiative including the provision of extra care housing, a new library, new church, setting up a community partnership, green space improvements, healthy living activities, skills training, and facilities for young people.
- Delivered neighbourhood management pilots in North Prospect and Stonehouse,
- Adapting 650 homes through Disabled Facilities Grants, supporting people to live independently in their own homes
- Preventing 500 families from becoming homeless last year
- Issuing over 685 Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMO) licences; investigating 655 HMO licensable properties; and, carrying out 292 HMO inspections.
- Responding to 2628 complaints from tenants and landlords
- Removing 341 Category 1 Health and Safety Hazards through reactive and proactive interventions
- Bringing 251 empty private sector homes back into use against a target of 234

However much remains to be done as we still have:

- Growing numbers of households on our waiting list rising from 6,500 a year ago to over 10,500 at present.
- Relatively unaffordable housing as 50% of Plymouths residents have a household income of under £20,000, while a first time buyer needs nearly £30,000 to achieve a home of their own.
- A sluggish housing market with 60% of all new homes built last year through publicly subsidised affordable homes.
- Significant waiting times for an adaptation against a backdrop of an ageing population and reduced resources

- 80 families currently in temporary housing because they are homeless
- Poor conditions of private sector housing stock, especially in the private rented sector where 43% of private rented homes are non-decent – this is 2% lower than the average for England in 2007.
- 680 private sector dwellings in the city that have stood empty for over 6 months
- 11,000 households living in fuel poverty, many living in poor health in older 'hard to treat' homes.
- 12 year gap in life expectancy between neighbourhoods at the bottom (Devonport) and top of the spectrum (Widewell).
- Around 200 larger families with complex needs require support so that they do not materially affect their neighbours lives , and can achieve more etc

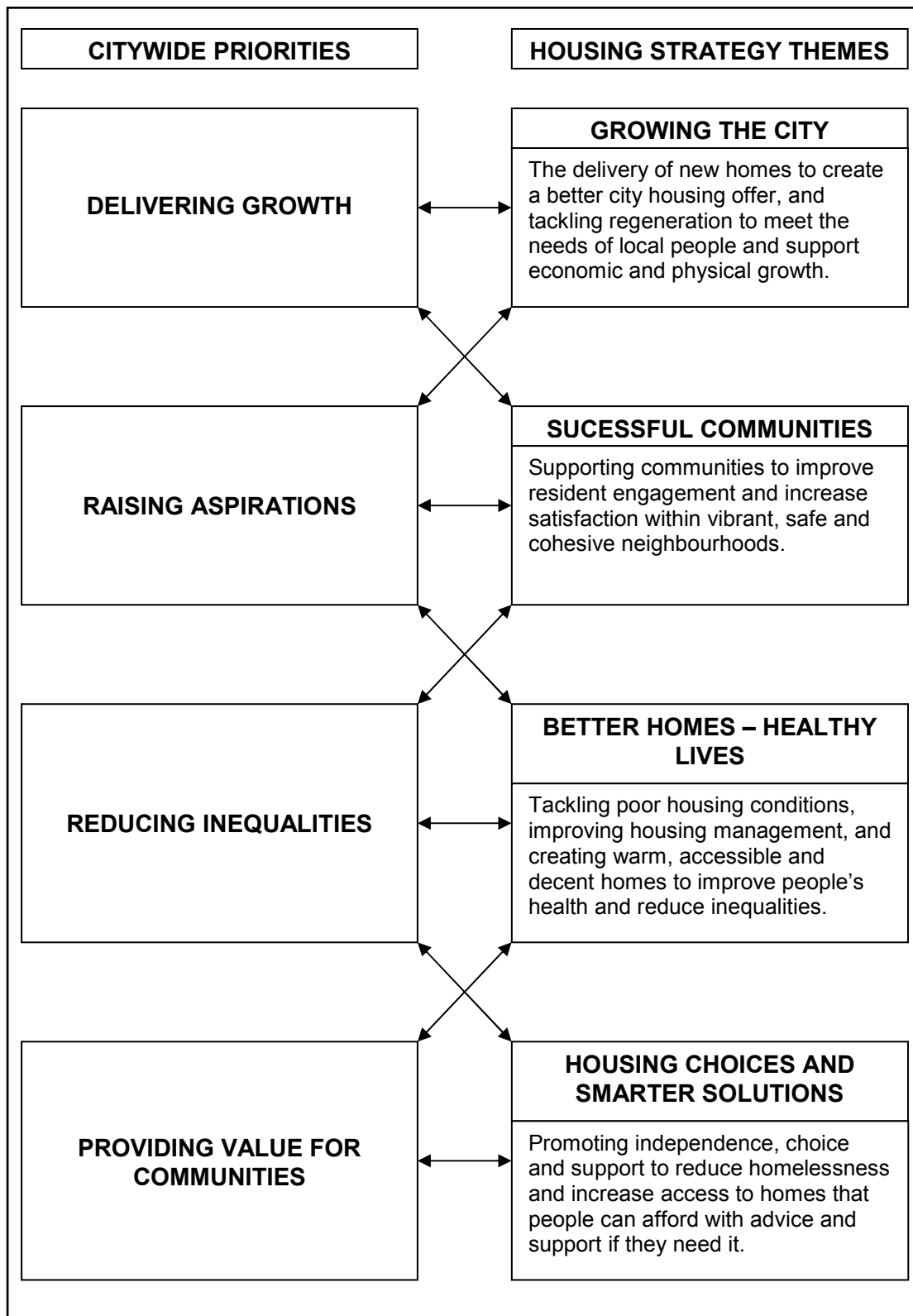
The city now needs to take stock of these and other challenges, and determine key priorities and targets to tackle health, and economic inequalities, support growth and regeneration, and build aspiration and capacity for successful communities on the route to our 2020 vision.

Priorities

Our Plymouth 2020 partnership has determined four key priorities and we set out below how we think that strategic housing themes relate to them. Housing and housing services by their nature are cross cutting within and between these priority areas. We should consider less how many interventions we make and more about, for example:

- How we can give older people the option to remain safely in their own homes, or in a better independent or supported solution, rather than going into a care home.
- Whether children are able to find a quiet space to do homework in a comfortable home environment and not live in poor, cold and overcrowded conditions
- That we have a wide and attractive housing offer for both existing and potential residents at a price they can afford.
- A material improvement in health and opportunities for people living in our most deprived neighbourhoods
- Our most vulnerable, including the very young, and old, are able to access good housing and support when they need it.

The chart over the page shows how the proposed strategy themes link and contribute to our Plymouth 2020 Partnership priorities.



Policies and Strategies

We currently have (too?) many strategies related to housing eg Empty Homes Strategy, Private Sector Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy, Home Energy Strategy etc. Our aim is to develop just one Housing Strategy, with a clear set of measurable and specific Delivery Plans covering specific areas of work to drive change and improvement across the priority themes.

Equally, the housing strategy priorities should connect with and support wider outcomes within other plans, such as the Local Economic Strategy, Children and Young Peoples Plan, Health Action Plan, Older Peoples Strategy etc

We have developed a planned process to develop a robust and inclusive Housing Strategy for the city that is not just about a key document, but is equally a process to shape agencies responses to housing issues which will:

- Engage all sectors, interests and available resources
- Focus on our 2020 aspirations and engage the partnership
- Reflect the common position statement 'State of Plymouth'
- Join up and works across different agencies and disciplines
- Set a clear policy priority framework for decisions on resourcing
- Define clear delivery plans for housing and related outcomes for the city so that we can track progress.

Process

The process to develop this begins with this multi-agency conference, which aims to:

1. Evaluate progress on our existing priorities
2. Determine the current challenges and issues on which we need to focus
3. Outline the strategic direction and key housing objectives and priorities to achieve our Plymouth 2020 vision
4. Consider how collectively we can deliver better on cross cutting targets and priorities across the themes of the strategy:
 - Better Homes and Healthy Lives
 - Growing the City
 - Housing Choice and Smarter Solutions
 - Successful Communities
5. Consider how we can apply our collective resources effectively to deliver these objectives
6. Agree which agencies will work together on short task and finish groups to develop solutions to the priority areas

The conference is arranged into two parts

- The first part will explore our progress and achievements against our current strategy, together with an overview of our new challenges and what options we have to meet them.
- The second part will feature facilitated themed workshops to discuss the options and define clear objectives to tackle our cities housing challenges based on the themes set out above.

Timing for Strategy Development

In outline we expect to follow the broad sequence set out below to develop the strategy, but will refine this to make sure we fit with consultations from government on key policy changes.

January:

- Run the conference to;
 - Consider key issues, challenges and options and debate and define outline priorities
 - Form multi agency thematic task and finish groups to develop them

January / February

- Task and finish groups to begin work on the strategy priorities to align priorities with other plans
- Start to develop the delivery plans which articulate how the priorities will be met

March / April / May

- Develop a draft strategy and achieve sign off through the task and finish multi agency groups – bring to cabinet planning.
- Consult wider reference groups, and LSP theme groups relevant to the strategy and Delivery Plans

June

- Finalise the strategy and submit to both Cabinet and Plymouth 2020 Partnership for approval

July/August

- Submit to Plymouth City Council Meeting for endorsement
- Launch strategy

Annually thereafter

- Delivery plan actions/ targets reported to Plymouth 2020 Partnership to show progress against the agreed priorities

Conclusions

The process is deliberately inclusive, engaging agencies all through its development, and while we will set out some key challenges, issues and options to start the debate, they are by no means exclusive.

We welcome the engagement and involvement of all agencies in forming a clear five year direction that is grounded in our key priorities, and which we hope will capture innovation and imagination, to ensure that we make better places to live for our residents in homes where they can thrive and prosper.